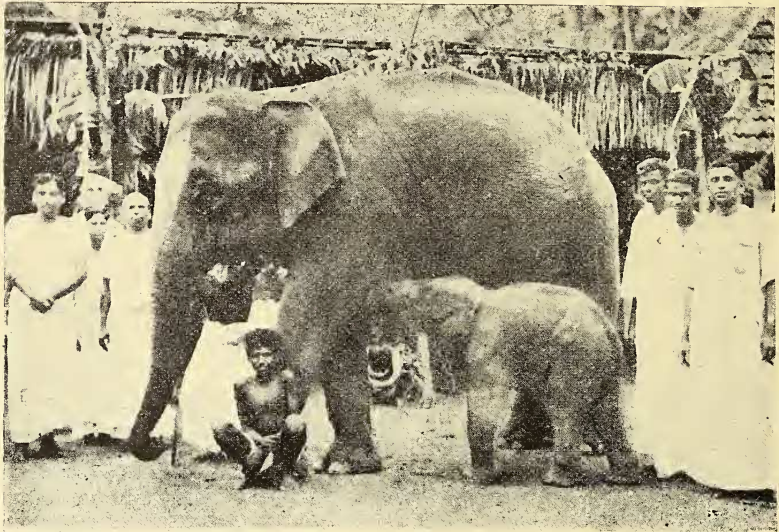


7.—PERIOD OF GESTATION OF THE INDIAN ELEPHANT (*ELEPHAS MAXIMUS*).

(With a photo).



Indian Elephant with newly born calf.

An interesting elephantine romance was brought to my notice by Mr. A. S. M. Nair, Commissioner, Hindu Religious Endowments Board, Madras. According to the very reliable reports he had obtained, a female elephant belonging to the Sri Emuri Bhagavati Temple, at Kallekulangara, near Palghat, in the Malabar District, was covered by a wild tusker, on or about the 19th November, 1938. The tusker came probably from the outskirts of the Olavakkot forest to the place where the cow elephant was tethered. The tusker remained with the cow elephant for three days, and the courtship and mating were watched by the inhabitants of the locality. The report that the tusker did not eat a morsel of food during the three days has not been verified by me. Efforts made to capture it by doping seem to have failed because of the tusker's extreme wariness. The tame female elephant calved on Friday 6th September 1940—this date was noted by the Manager of the temple, Mr. E. Chathu Achan, of Akathethara village—and the baby tusker, now about five years old, is said to be thriving. In the photograph reproduced here (which was very kindly lent to me by Mr. Nair), the baby elephant can be seen sucking its mother's milk.

The period of gestation in this case is about 21 months and 18 days. In the case of a male calf reported by Corse (*Tr. Roy. Soc.* 1799) it was 20 months and 18 days.

I was informed by the Manager of the temple that in August 1945, the same wild tusker came again to the old spot to meet the female elephant, and this time it was driven away with the

greatest difficulty. The people of Malabar are so elephant-minded that reliance can be placed on their identification of the tusker as the one they knew in 1938.

GOVT. MUSEUM,
EGMORE, MADRAS,

A. AIYAPPAN.

20th November 1945.

8.—BIRTH OF AN ELEPHANT CALF.

Reading in the Miscellaneous notes of the *Journal* of the B.N.H. Society, on page 183 of Volume xxxviii, of the birth of an elephant calf on the bank of the Menik Ganga in Ceylon, brought to my mind an experience of my own on X'mas day 1903 in the Anamalai Hills, near Coimbatore. On that day, about 9 in the morning, the late Mr. G. A. Marsh and I went to visit a small plantation of bananas, on the Paralai Estate, which had been damaged by elephants. Hearing a herd of elephants a considerable distance away in the jungle making a tremendous amount of noise, much more than usual,—trumpetting, squealing, breaking of branches etc., we decided to investigate, and proceeding towards the herd, which could not be seen owing to the extremely dense jungle, we soon found a wild fig tree, very easy to climb, on one of the branches of which, about 25 feet above the ground, we perched ourselves. Shortly after this, three female elephants came up to our tree, and one of them entered a cane brake, (*Eeta*) right under the branch on which we were sitting. The other two remained outside the clump of *Eeta*, apparently keeping guard, for on the approach of other members of the herd, (it was a fair sized herd of about 30 animals we thought) they were definitely warded off. After a time—about half an hour—the two guards went away, but we could not descend from our tree because we knew the third elephant was still in the cane below us. We were very mystified as we could not even guess at what was happening. We waited there for a full hour, at the end of which the third elephant emerged, went a few steps, put its trunk to the ground and made that peculiar drumming noise, one so frequently hears an elephant make. At once a very small calf came out from the cane, and went with slow steps towards its mother. It was wet and shiny, but not very dark skinned. It was suckled for a short while, when the mother moved on towards the direction of the herd which was by then a quarter to half a mile away, still making much more noise than usual.

When we considered it safe to do so, and the mother and calf had disappeared, we descended from the tree and inspected the cane brake. We found the placenta there—a very pale pink, and weighing, we judged, about 10 lbs. This placenta looked rather like pale raw liver. There were two or three very much thickened portions, roundish in shape, about 3 inches in diameter which we judged might have been the attachment of the placenta to the body of the mother. These thicker portions were between $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch thick, but the rest of the placenta was much thinner—not more than $\frac{1}{16}$ th to $\frac{1}{8}$ th of an inch.